

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 NEW DE 07254 01 OF 02 151014Z

13

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 OMB-01 IO-13 ACDA-07 /077 W

----- 032338

O R 150920Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5992

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA IMMEDIATE

CINCPAC IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 7254

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, BG

SUBJ: MARCH ON FARAKKA

REF: NEW DELHI 7205

SUMMARY: GOI ISSUED SECOND STATEMENT IN 24 HOURS STATING THAT THE BDG WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR PREVENTING ANY VIOLATION OF ITS TERRITORY BY FARAKKA MARCHERS. MAY 15 DELHI EDITORIAL COMMENT ON THE MARCH IS RESTRAINED BUT EMPHASIZES BDG'S RESPONSIBILITY. HEAD OF CHANCERY IN THE BDG HIGH COMMISSION TOLD EMBOFF MAY 15 HE WAS CERTAIN HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT PERMIT MARCHERS TO CROSS BORDER. HE DESCRIBED THE GOI REACTION AS VERY STRONG AND WAS UNSURE AS TO WHETHER GOI GOODWILL MISSION EXPECTED TO VISIT DACCA WOULD BE DELAYED. IN MAY 15 CONVERSATION

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PAGE 02 NEW DE 07254 01 OF 02 151014Z

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ALARMED BY BHASHANI MARCH BUT SAID A FEW HOT HEADS MIGHT CREATE UNFORESEEABLE PROBLEMS. HE SAID THAT A NEW DATE FOR THE GOI MISSION TO BANGLADESH WOULD HAVE TO BE SET; MAY 16-17 NO LONGER POSSIBLE. ON THE FARAKKA TECHNICAL MISSIONS WHICH MET IN DACCA AND WEST OENGAL, AJMANI (WHO WAS A MEMBER OF INDIAN TEAM) GENERALLY INDICATED THAT THE BANGLADESHIS WERE UNWILLING TO SUBSTANTIATE THEIR CLAIMS OF DAMAGE DUE TO THE INDIAN WITHDRAWALS. ON THE REFUSAL OF THE GOI TO ATTEST THE REPORT ON THE BORDER INCIDENTS, AJMANI EXPLAINED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT DID NOT ACCEPT THE TESTIMONY OF THE BDG WITNESSES, WHO COULD EASILY HAVE BEEN BOUTHT. GOI WOULD NOT COOPERATE IN A REPORT INTENDED TO BE USED BY BDG FOR PROPAGANDA. AJMANI CONCLUDED THAT THE BDG APPEARED TO BE PLACING THE BLAME FOR ALL ITS PROBLEMS ON INDIA'S DOOR.

WE SEE THE MARCH AS PROVIDING THE GOI A USEFUL OPPORTUNITY TO PORTRAY ITSELF AS THE ABOUT-TO-BE-AGGRESSED-UPON PARTY. WE BELIEVE THAT BOTH SIDES WILL TRY TO AVOID AN INCIDENT IN CONNECTION WITH THE MARCH WHICH WOULD FURTHER EXACERBATE RELATIONS. PROSPECTS FOR A SOLUTION ON FARAKKA ARE NOT ENCOURAGING GIVEN THE SUBSTANTIAL MUTUAL DISTRUST AND SUSPICION. THE GOI'S COUNTER-FIRE ON THE MARCH IS PROBABLY INTENDED TO PROVIDE A PUBLIC RELATIONS JUSTIFICATION SHOULD AN UNTOWARD INCIDENT OCCUR AND TO BLAME THE BDG FOR IMPEDING SOLUTIONS TO INDO-BANGLADESH PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY.

1. DELHI PRESS MAY 15 PROMINENTLY REPORTS MAY 14 STATEMENT OF GOI SPOKESMAN THAT INDIA HAS TAKEN ALL NECESSARY MEASURES TO DEAL WITH THE THREATENED MARCH ON FARAKKA ORGANIZED BY MAULANA BHASHANI. IN THE SECOND OFFICIAL STATEMENT WITHIN 24; HOURS (REFTEL) THE GOI SAID THAT THE BDG WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING THAT THERE WAS NO VIOLATION OF THE BORDER. THE SPOKESMAN REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE GOI WAS CONVINCED THAT ANY PROBLEM COULD BE RESOLVED BY FRIENDLY NEGOTIATIONS RATHER THAN BY THREATS AND RECRIMINATIONS. CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 NEW DE 07254 01 OF 02 151014Z

2. "PATRIOT" MAY 15 REPORTS THAT THE BORDER SECURITY FORCE HAS BEEN ALERTED TO DEAL WITH THE MAY 16 MARCH. WEST BENGAL HOME MINISTER OF STATE DR. MOTAHAR HOSAIN REPORTEDLY TOLD THE PRESS THAT HE UNDERSTANDS THAT MAULANA BHASHANI WAS NOT AT RAJSHAHI IN BANGLADESH.

3. "PATRIOT" POINTS OUT THAT GIVEN THE DISTANCE OF FARAKKA

FROM THE BORDER IT IS UNLIKELY THAT A BIG CROWD WOULD MARCH TO FARAKKA. "IT, THEREFORE, APPEARED TO MANY THAT THE WHOLE NOISE IS DESIGNED TO ATTRACT FOREIGN ATTENTION AND TO POISON THE MINDS OF HOSTILE FOREIGN FORCES AGAINST INDIA."

4. THREE OF THE SIX NEW DELHI DAILIES MAY 15 EDITORIALIZE ON BANGLADESH. ALL ARE RELATIVELY RESTRAINED BUT EMPHASIZE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE BDG TO PREVENT THE MARCH.

5. HEAD OF CHANCERY OF THE BANGLADESH HIGH COMMISSION, M. AHMED TOLD EMBOFF MAY 15 THAT HE WAS QUITE CERTAIN BDG WOULD NOT PERMIT FARAKKA DEMONSTRATORS TO CROSS BORDER. HE EXPECTED THAT GROUP WOULD MARCH TO THE BORDER AND HOLD A RALLY AT WHICH RESOLUTIONS WOULD BE PASSED. AHMED WAS QUITE TAKEN ABACK BY WHAT HE CHARACTERIZED AS A VERY STRONG GOI REACTION. HE FOUND THIS SURPRISING AS THE BDG AND GOI WERE DISCUSSING DATES FOR THE INDIAN GOODWILL MISSION TO VISIT DACCA, WHICH HAD BEEN EXPECTED SOMETIME IN MAY. AHMED THOUGHT THAT THE GOI "SHOULD NOT" DELAY THE MISSION BUT WAS LESS CERTAIN AS TO WHAT WOULD HAPPEN. ASKED ABOUT THE GOI CLAIM (REFTEL) THAT IT HAD FURTHER

NOTE BY OC/T:(#) OMISSION. CORRECTION TO FOLLOW,

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 07254 02 OF 02 151023Z

11

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NEW DELHI 7254

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REDUCED ITS OFFTAKE OF FARAKKA WATERS, AHMED DOUBTED THAT THIS HAD TAKEN PLACE. IF THERE HAD BEEN AN INCREASE IN THE AMOUNT OF WATER BANGLADESH WAS RECEIVING, AHMED TOUGHT THAT THIS WAS PROBABLY DUE TO THE EARLY MELTING OF THE SNOWS. AN ANY RATE, HE OBSERVED THAT THE LEAN PERIOD THIS YEAR WAS ENDING EARLY AND WAS PROBABLY NOW TERMINATED.

6. MEA ADDITIONAL SECRETARY (BANGLADESH) AJMANI IN MAY 15 CONVERSATION WITH POLCOUNSELOR DID NOT APPEAR UNDULY ALARMED ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF BANGALEES CROSSING INDIAN BORDER ON BHASHANI MARCH BUT SAID IT WAS HARD TO PREDICT WAHT A FEW HOT HEADS MIGHT DO WHICH COULD CREATE UNFORESEEN PROBLEMS. AJMANI SAID INDIANS HAD ORIGINALLY PLANNED TO SEND THEIR GOOD-WILL TEAM TO DACCA MAY 16-17 BUT ZIA'S DEPARTURE FOR ISLAMIC FONMIN CONFERENCE AND PUBLICITY ABOUT BHASHANI MARCH WOULD NOW NECESSITATE FIXING NEW DATE LATER IN THE MONTH.

7. AJMANI CHARACTERIZED DACCA AND WEST BENGAL DISCUSSIONS
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 07254 02 OF 02 151023Z

OVER LAST TWO WEEKS AS MARKED BY BANGALEE EMOTIONALISM AND REFUSAL TO ADDRESS THEMSELVES TO FUNDAMENTAL TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS. HE SAID GOI HAD OFFERED TO EXCHANGE TEAMS WITH INSTRUMENTS WHICH WOULD BE JOINTLY CALIBRATED TO TEST WATER FLOW SALINITY RECHARGING RATES ON BOTH SIDES. GOI HAD OFFERED TO ASSIST IN DREDGING SERIOUSLY AFFECTED WATER CHANNELS ON BANGLADESH SIDE IF BDG COULD PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF EXTENT TO WHICH INDIAN FARAKKA WITHDRAWALS HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR INCREASED SILTING. AJMANI EXPRESSED SERIOUS DOUBT ABOUT INTEGRITY OF BDG FIGURES AND SAID BDG HAD DECLINED TO PROVIDE INFO ON PLACES AND FREQUENCY OF COLLECTION OF DATA OVER PERIOD OF TIME.

8. GOI WOULD BE WILLING, AJMANI SAID, TO CONSIDER ABATING USEAGE OF FARAKKA WATER IF BDG DEMONSTRATED FACTUALLY DEGREE TO WHICH CURRENT OFFTAKE WAS AFFECTING IT COMPARED WITH PAST. THIS BANGALEES HAD NOT DONE, HE INSISTED.

9. ON QUESTION OF REVIEW OF BORDER INCIDENTS BY TWO BORDER SECURITY FORCES, AJAMNI SAID GOI WOULD NOT PROVIDE ATTESTATION OF REPORT SINCE IT DID NOT BELIEVE THE TESTIMONY OF WITNESSES BROUGHT FORWARD BY BDG. "ANYONE CAN BUY A WITNESS FOR RS.5", HE SAID. BDG ONLY WANTED TO USE REPORT FOR PROPAGANDA PURPOSES AND GOI WOULD NOT COOPERATE IN THAT END.

1. AJMANI CONCLUDED THAT GOI WOULD CONTINUE TO TRY TO WORK ITS WAY TOWARD AGREEMENT WITH BDG, BUT INCREASINGLY IT APPEARED THAT BDG HAD LOST THE MOORINGS FOR ANY REASONABLE FOREIGN OR DOMESTIC POLICY OTHER THAN ONE WHICH LAID ALL BDG PROBLEMS AT INDIA'S DOOR.

11. COMMENT: WE SEE THE BHASHANI MARCH AS PROVIDING A VERY CONVENIENT OPPORTUNITY FOR THE GOI TO PRESENT ITSELF TO WORLD OPINION AS THE ABOUT-TO-BE-AGGRESSED-UPON PARTY. WE AGREE WITH AHMED AND "PATRIOT'S" COMMENT (PARAGRAPH 2) THAT A VIOLATION OF THE INDIAN BORDER IS UNLIKELY AND AJMANI'S REMARKS INDICATE THAT THE GOI KNOWS THIS. IT IS CONCEIVABLE THERE MAY BE SOME BANGALEES WITH A YEN FOR MARTYRDOM WHO COULD TRY TO DO SOMETHING RASH, BUT WE BELIEVE THE INDIANS (AND BDG) WILL PROBABLY TRY TO AVOID AN INCIDENT WHICH WOULD INEVITABLY FURTHER EXACERBATE RELATIONS. SO FAR AS A FARAKKA
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PAGE 03 NEW DE 07254 02 OF 02 151023Z

SOLUTION IS CONCERNED, WE DO NOT SEE MUCH ENCOURAGEMENT FROM EITHER AJMANI'S REMARKS TO US OR BDG OFFICIALS' COMMENTS TO EMBASSY DACCA. BOTH SIDES ARE CLEARLY CONFRONTING A GRAVE PROBLEM OF MUTUAL MISTRUST AND SUSPICION WHICH PERMEATES TO THE LEVEL OF DISBELIEVING EACH OTHER'S VERSIONS OF TECHNICAL DATA. THE INDIANS ARE ANNOYED THAT ZIA, WEARING HIS HAT OF MININFO, HAS ALLOWED PUBLICITY TO BUILD IN BANGLADES ABOUT BHASHANI'S MARCH, AND SUSPECT THAT INCREASINGLY HE IS LOSING HIS OWN FREEDOM OF ACTION VIS-A-VIS THE ANTI-INDIAN RADICALS IN BANGLADESH. THE GOI'S OWN COUNTER-FIRE ON BHASHANI'S MARCH IS PROBABLY MEANT BOTH TO PROVIDE A PUBLIC RELATIONS JUSTIFICATION SHOULD AN UNTOWARD INCIDENT OCCUR, AND TO BLAME BANGLADESH FOR OBSTRUCTING PROGRESS TOWARD NEGOTIATED SOLUTIONS TO INDO-BANGLADESH PROBLEMS.
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